

## **Policy Academies for State and Local Policymakers**

### ***Improving Access to Mainstream Services for Homeless Persons***

State governments play a pivotal role in determining eligibility for accessing mainstream Federal and State funded health and human service programs—including *access to these programs by people who are homeless*. The U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Health and Human Services are co-sponsoring two regional Policy Academies that will assist States in overcoming barriers to accessing mainstream services for this population. The first of the two and one-half day academies is scheduled for November 26, 2001 in Sante Fe, New Mexico and will focus on services for *homeless families with children*; the second one is planned for the Spring of 2002 and will focus on persons who are *chronically homeless*, including those with mental health and/or substance abuse problems.

The Policy Academies are part of a much larger initiative between HUD and HHS as announced by HUD Secretary Mel Martinez in several recent public forums designed to further refine and expand the Federal response to assisting the homeless. The principal goal of this initiative is to end chronic homelessness in the United States. This objective will be achieved, in part, through an expansion of HUD's role in meeting the permanent housing needs of homeless people coordinated with a greatly enlarged role for HHS's mainstream supportive service programs in meeting the health and human service needs of homeless persons so critical to the ultimate goal of ending homelessness.

The specific purpose of these Policy Academies is to provide the opportunity for critical state and local government officials, as well as other stakeholders, to come together as a team, to "brainstorm" and create basic strategy/action coordinating plans specific to their own state's ability to improve access for homeless individuals and programs to mainstream services.

Each Policy Academy will host eight State Teams comprised of individuals, approved of by each State governor, that have policy and/or budget authority over mainstream health and service programs. Each team will be paired with a nationally recognized faculty who will facilitate team planning during the Academy workshop sessions. Teams completing the Academy phase will be provided with follow-up technical assistance to help refine and implement their Action Plan. It is anticipated that additional input and consensus will be obtained from stakeholders across each state before beginning that phase.

The final selection of teams has not been made as of this date. Considering the enthusiastic response and the number of State Team applications, the two Departments are strongly considering the development of additional Academies in order for the balance of the interested States to participate in this process at a later date.

For more information on the Policy Academies, contact Robyn Raysor at (202) 708-1234 or Vanessa M. Barnard at (202)708-2140 in the Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs.